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EOA or West

London Stories

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Wild Cucumbers

Nina Davis

Aladdin's Falafel House. My favourite - Middle-Eastern cuisine. The sign says closed but I notice a small man with a smiling face motioning me to come across the street. I can open early, he says with a low silky accent. As I get closer, I see this is more than just a smiling face. This is a very beautiful smiling face with gentle twinkling eyes. I stop breathing and indiscreetly let my eyes feast on this fine display of maleness standing in front of me. I am surprised at my strong and immediate attraction to him. He is not what I would have thought I would typically find interesting. He is probably ten years older than I am, at least a half a foot shorter, slightly pudgy, and balding.

Would you like me to open the restaurant? he asks returning my appreciative gaze in an equally overt way. I feel a pleasant pang in my groin similar to a bee sting without the pain. My honey starts to flow assuring me I am definitely not dead down there.

I sit on a red plastic swivel stool at the counter, which divides the tiny seating area from the open kitchen. I order tabooli, babba ganouch, hummous, some falafel patties, and pita with extra tahini sauce, heavy on the garlic. I watch him as he busies himself with parsley and lemons and tomatoes. Our eyes exchange glances back and forth as our mouths exchange small talk. I wonder if he is starting to breathe heavier because of the heat of the kitchen but I quickly decide it is probably the same thing that is happening to my breath. I was never good at Chemistry, but I know there is a chemical reaction happening here, one that requires increased oxygen uptake, uses lust as a catalyst and produces a byproduct of increased salivation and stimulated sweat glands. I unroll the fork, knife and spoon from the white paper napkin in front of me and try to discreetly dab the corners of my mouth before drool escapes and puddles on the freshly cleaned green and yellow swirl arborite.

I pray for the food to arrive soon and divert my attention before I break out in a full blown sweat or worse whip my clothes off, jump up on the counter and beg take me. The food is gently placed in front of me with an enjoy but relief does not come with it. He stands by the counter with his feet crossed leaning back, smiling and watching me dip my pita into the smooth and silky baba Ganesh. We continue to exchange small talk about garlic and grilled eggplant, our children and the beautiful sunny day, while our eyes carry on a conversation of their own.

I hear the words How long have you lived here? come from my lips as my eyes slowly start to take off his clothing one item at a time. I start with his shirt and admire his tufts of curly black chest hair, not too thick of course. I follow the line of hair, extending from his chest in an arrow like motion, towards the button of his jeans. I deftly but gently roll the button hole over the button and in one smooth and decisive action lower his zipper being careful to pull it towards me as to not catch anything on the way down. His pants fall to the floor as he sucks erotically on my tongue. He is not wearing any underwear.

God knows what he is doing to me when he answers fifteen years. By his look I am quite sure it is something I have never experienced before. I caress his chest lightly with the tips of my fingers and then with my tongue. I linger on his nipple while I slowly tease his stomach with tickling arching motions that just miss the spot he most wants to be touched. I run my tongue down to his belly button, circle and insert a couple of times and then descend to the tip of his erection, sliding my hands firmly around his quivering buttocks. I am just about to open my mouth and slip him inside when he asks

Would you like a pickle with your lunch? I have some special wild cucumber pickles. Wild cucumbers make the best pickles very nice here, you try.

Huh? --- oh yes --- yes a pickle -- a wild one -- a special one -- a very nice one -- yes thank you.

He pulls the longest pickle I have ever seen in my life out of his special wild pickle jar, shakes off the excess juices and gently places it across my plate. I look at it for a moment trying to decide what to do with it. I can't bear to jab it with my fork and cut it into pieces with my knife and I am afraid I will

find myself trying to take it to pickle orgasm if I get it anywhere near my mouth in its whole intact wild cucumber state.

I think I'll get the pickle to go. Would you mind wrapping it up for me along with a couple of baklava slices for the road? They look good sitting there all dripping in honey like that. I wonder if I might have taken that last comment just a little bit too far but he merely flashes me an exquisite smile and steps back behind the counter busying himself with wrapping.

I leave with my small brown paper doggy bag and a face as flushed as a teenager sneaking in late from a prom night she spent half of in the backseat of her boyfriend's car. I realize I don't even know the name of the man I just made love to. I slither back to the motel room, take off my loveable lilac underpants and unwrap the awaiting cucumber.

The Empty Cafe

Wayne Ray

Her words drift through the cigarette smoke, rising from fingers held in midair over the red cafe table where she sits with a friend. She had used these words before to weave the smoke strands into coherent conversations. Words move through the gray-white air in the nearly empty cafe, devoid of nightlife, just a few customers eating and breathing. The television is on. The video plays a Beatles documentary. Coffee cups resonate spoon stirs. She stops her well spoken words and turns her head toward the couple in the booth across the dusty aisle. Stirring stops and sipping begins. She brings her head back into her conversation, looks for an ashtray, and finds one near his "bottomless coffee cup" as the French waiter calls it. Pouring without asking, coming by without being called.

The word weaving continues for the duration of four cigarettes, three beers, two cups of coffee and -- "a hard days night." She hadn't noticed that her friend held her other hand with his. The hand that wasn't being used for the drinks. He stroked the suntanned soft skin between her knuckles as the smoke wandered up and up, swirled about their table and nowhere else. Words and random sentences hung on smoke curls, dropped from her mouth and meandered across the table. He ran the back of his fingernails along her wrist and up her forearm as she blended words and phrases into paragraphs full of purpose, coated with concern. The cafe had cleared of customers. The waiter returned to clear the table then left again.

She looked over to the opposite side of the table and noticed his hand on hers for the first time and smiled. The staff disappeared into the back kitchen. The quiet grew deeper and it was then that he noticed that she was naked. She was sitting at the table in the nude and no one had noticed. He saw her in the red glow of the wall lamp that hung between them just above the napkin dispenser. Her eyes said everything. They were robin's egg enchanting. Her breasts rested on the table as she leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek and ran her fingers through his hair. Her hand moved softly down his face as she slid along the leather cafe seat toward the aisle and stood up. She gathered the wafts of smoke and the words and phrases in her bare arms, stepped up onto the table top and walked into the painting above the place where they sat. She strolled across the acrylic field and sat in the shade of the acrylic tree with half her body covered in shade, the other by sunshine, not far from a blue acrylic pond.

He brought his fingers to his lips and closed his eyes for a second. "Last call," yelled the waiter from behind the kitchen door. He emptied his glass for the last time and walked along the acrylic tiled floor and stood in front of the acrylic door of "The Empty Cafe."

Don t Blame The Stone

Wayne Ray

Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me? Six year old Sarah fell on the hard grey sidewalk, scraping red her bare knees. Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me . . . Six year old Sarah fell to her knees screaming on the inside less than a moment after the stone hit her in the left eye. You know that pain where you breath in and can t seem to breath out? Sarah felt like that. Alone and now in fear of the unknown.

Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me? Isn t it enough that I get teased and pushed around on the school yard. Isn t it enough that my mom has to see the cuts weekly and bully bruises. Sarah cupped her hands over her left eye, fell further forward and cried. There was no one on the street before the stone as she walked over to her Aunt s house and there was no one on the street after the stone. There was quiet and there was sobbing. The blinds were down on her Aunt s house as she sat waiting for Sarah.

Don t you know that you have ruined my childhood. Caused me to be self-conscious about my blind eye. Made me wear dark glasses to hide the visible pain. Wonder who you are? I walk on the left side of life so I can see the right side of life & sit on the left side at movies. Why did you hurt me? Why did you hurt me? Sarah fainted and the sidewalk shared her pain.

Don t blame the stone. It had been there for six-thousand Sarahs. Deposited in some glacial till during the last Ice Age. Been part of a larger rock worn down through the 40,000 seasons in the new land. The stone was just lying around on the edge of the field at the end of the street. Don t blame the stone. It didn t want to hurt any one, particularly sweet little Sarah. A few weeks earlier the stone and Sarah had met. She was at the park, alone on the swing set when she jumped off the seat. She picked up the small smooth round green stone and carried it with her to the edge of the grass where she dropped it near the sidewalk, beside a bridle-wreath spirea. Don t blame the stone.

Sarah s Aunt got up and parted the blinds with her long, thin fingers. Sarah s Aunt looked out past the blinds and saw Sarah lying on the sidewalk on the far side of the street, sobbing. The stinging in Sarah s knees made her come to and through the tears she saw her Aunt rushing down the steps, across the porch, past the flowers, along the concrete path to the sidewalk, over the black asphalt, onto the curb and knelt down beside her. Sarah s Aunt saw the stone, the cupped hands, the bloody knees and knew. She reached out and picked her niece up and held her in her arms, close.

As the stone left the slingshot just moments before and sailed through the air, it saw Sarah walking down the street. It thought about her laughter, her daily swinging and playing. The stone had seen a thousand children, but only one Sarah. Don t blame the stone.

As the stone sailed through the air, it had no idea it would have any effect on Sarah s life, her childhood, highschool, failed marriages, abusive relationships and future happiness. If the stone had known all of this, it wouldn t have felt elated, sailing through the air. It wouldn t have been happy to see Sarah. Sarah s Aunt lifted her off the sidewalk and kicked the small green stone with her foot. The stone rolled off the sidewalk and slid into the storm drain where it got wedged in a crack in the wall and remained there for forty-seven years.

Why did I hurt you? Why did I hurt you? Why did I hurt you? Why did I hurt you? Why did I hurt you? Why did I hurt you?

Don t blame the stone.

Leaving London

Wayne Ray

Standing on the shoulder of Highway 20, just East of Montreal was a random act of kindness. I signaled, looked in my mirrors and pulled off the highway onto the shoulder of the road.

Two hours earlier I had thrown suitcase number five, my camera case, and a bag of laundry onto the front seat of my Corsica. The backseat held two more suitcases, pots and pans, clothes, and an empty cat cage. I figured I had another eight hours to drive to my new job in Fredericton New Brunswick, added to the six hours I had driven the day before. When the car came to a complete stop. I quickly shoved everything from the front seat into the back.

As the passenger's door opened I half expected a French accent as we were so close to Montreal. This hitchhiker was unlike anyone I had ever given a ride to. Here it was, a bright cloudless day on the road to nowhere and there standing along the highway was a man with only one leg and his crutches to balance himself while he thumbed for a ride. He was tall and thin and one would think a blast of wind from a passing transport truck would have blown him over. The first things to enter the car were his two crutches followed by one arm and a friendly hello as he swung himself into the passenger's seat. When he sat down, I noticed that not only was his left leg missing his left hip was missing too. Hopefully for his sake, his middle leg was still intact.

Thanks, man . . . he smiled from under his black baseball cap and pony-tailed hair. His oval face tapered into a goatee . . . Thanks. I've been out here for over an hour and no one stops to pick me up.

No problem, I said after he closed the door and I checked my mirrors and signaled, speeding along the shoulder to match the speed of the traffic before pulling onto the pavement. Where are you going? I asked, rolling up the window to decrease the noise level.

Heading home to New Brunswick. I just moved here two weeks ago from Edmonton. Me and some buddies drove over to Cornwall to go drinkin' for a few days. He put his head back against the seat. I could tell he was thinking about something or just very tired.

The name's Ryan, I said as the car moved into traffic and flowed along at twenty miles an hour over the speed limit. A few large rounded hills dotted the landscape on the right side of the highway. On the left, we followed the St. Lawrence River as it gradually widened the farther we traveled toward Quebec City until the turn-off for the Atlantic Provinces.

Mike, he said, extending his right hand to shake mine in a firm grip. You look like you are either movin' to or movin' away from some place? He glanced in the back seat and then looked at me.

Moving to. I said. Maybe in his mind there was a difference. I still own a house in London, Ontario that I have rented out. I'm moving down east for a year with my job, so in a sense, I'm not really moving away. Maybe I was just running away, I thought. I had burdened myself with so much in the past two years that I couldn't finish anything properly. Strangely though, it had only taken three weeks after accepting this new job to tie up loose ends, finish all the small projects, renovate and rent the house, pack and leave. I now realize I could have done all that and kept my job, but there were other social and personal things I just couldn't deal with honestly, if I didn't take a break from them.

Not me, man, he responded almost immediately with a sense of accomplishment. Mike looked out the side window, then continued, I was so fed up with growing up and living in that nothing town of Edmonton. I took my last pay cheque, opened up a map of Canada, closed my eyes and pointed my finger to a spot on the map and left.

Where did you end up moving to? I asked as he fumbled with his cigarette package. I'll pull over in a while if you want to smoke outside the car, I said as we passed a transport truck climbing over a hill.

Well, I don't know? I think it's just inside the border. It begins with an I and ends with an N. We should be in New Brunswick in a few hours, maybe I'll recognize a sign or somethin'?

You don't know where you live? I asked, bewildered. The traffic lightened up and we were the

only vehicle on the highway for a long time. Well, what's the name of the bar you work and where are the guys that you drove down with?

No, I don't recall the name of the town. And I don't know the name of the bar either. He adjusted the crutches and leaned on his left elbow, staring forward into the Quebec countryside. He didn't seem too concerned, like he knew he would eventually find his way. I leaned forward and turned down the radio. It was just background noise anyway. We drove on in silence, except for the hum of the wheels, for almost an hour.

There's a truck stop ahead, I'll pull in and you can have a smoke. I can feel the transmission slipping anyway and I should check out the fluids.

Sounds like a plan, he said. I was dozing off but I kept feeling something was pulling at my throat, musta been the nicotine. I worked as mechanic in Edmonton and I felt a bit of a pull in the engine. You're probably just low on transmission fluid. We'll be ok for a couple of hours.

Farther along the road I slowed the car, signaled and pulled onto the exit lane for the rest stop. When we got there, Mike pulled himself out of the seat, leaned against the car and lit up. I grabbed the map from the glove compartment located between the two front seats, got out and placed it on the roof of the car. It was quite windy under the light blue sky. I showed him all the towns along the routes but he didn't recognize any of them. He took so long that I was beginning to think that he couldn't read them either.

Mike finished his cigarette and got back into the car. I was around the front checking the various fluids. The oil and antifreeze were ok but the tranny fluid was low. I closed the hood, got back in my seat and threw the map in the back and we drove off.

I saw three towns in New Brunswick that start with the letter I and end with the letter N. Both of them are on the northeast part of the province. Near the city of Bathurst. Now there was a name I hadn't thought of in twenty years. One of my new projects was to find an old friend who lived there, that I had lost contact with when I was twenty-two. Does that name sound familiar? I asked.

No, not really, he said, me and my buddies drove for five hours and we went through Maine to get to Cornwall. Had to cross the border twice if I remember, in and out. His eyes squinted and he squeezed his lips together, well, they ain't my buddies anymore. Screw 'em! he gesticulated, throwing the finger at the clear blue sky and the Quebec City sign. I told them when and where to pick me up and then they never showed. They must have gone back without me and my wallet with all my ID is still in their car. What am I gonna do when we get to the border?

There's no border between Quebec and New Brunswick? I said, We're going around Maine, not through it. Mike sat there for the longest time, thinking about it all. I guess, unless he was still a bit hung over. I had a lot to think about as well. I knew where I was going and where I was coming from. The day I left, a close friend said I hope you find what you are looking for? I hadn't thought I had given her or anyone for that matter, the impression that I was looking for something I didn't have or that I needed. Was I projecting that image and not realizing it? She was the only one who thought I should stay. Everyone else thought it was a great opportunity to travel, see another part of the country and get paid three thousand dollars a month at the same time.

I hadn't planned on traveling alone either. After cleaning up around the house and storing most of my stuff in the garage I had painted primary red, yellow and blue, I spent a frustrating hour and a half trying to get my cat, Leviathan, into the car to put him in the cage. Twice I caught him and twice he scratched me and got loose before I could get him to the car. He must have sensed something was changing in his life and the house we lived in. He was not his usual docile eight-year-old self.

I need another smoke, Mike said as we neared Riviere de Loop, where we would be making our turn and leaving Quebec. I've been trying to think of the name of that town but I can't. I gotta take a piss, too. As the St. Lawrence widened to its greatest width and small islands began to appear in the middle of the river, we pulled off the road, under a bridge for a short break. Mike used the passengers door as a shield against the wind and the traffic while he relieved himself and then had a smoke. Well, that shot down my image of a double amputation!

Mike and I spent the next hour or so on the road in silence or listening to the radio (when we could get an English-speaking station), pointing out the change in scenery from Quebec to New Brunswick.

You got a family, Ryan? he said, adjusting his one leg and turning slightly to look at me as he spoke.

A couple of brothers and a sister. I answered, turning down the radio again and rolling my window up against the continued noise of the wind.

I'm the middle child of fifteen kids, he said, all of us were born in late summer or early Fall. The last time I talked to any of them was about two years ago. I went over to shoot the shit with my younger sister and we got in a big fight after we went to the bar for a beer.

Where's the rest of your family?

Oh God, they're all over Alberta and three older brothers in Toronto and Ottawa and another sister and her family in Woodstock. That's close to London, ain't it?

Yes, it's about thirty miles from London. I grew up there. Does anyone in your family know that you moved out here?

Nope, came his firm reply. The fields began to disappear and the tree growth became thicker as we traveled farther east.

Did you bring anything with you when you came out to the town you can't remember?

Some clothes, a stereo and stuff I picked up along the way. We just drove past the Welcome To New Brunswick sign and the nearest city was Edmundston. There's the border, he said. So let me get this straight, I said, changing lanes to pass some vehicles. You came out here with next to nothing. You didn't tell anyone where you were going and you don't recall the name of the town you've been living in for the past two weeks? You managed to get a job but you don't know the name of it, either and these so-called friends have your wallet with all your ID, in their car?

Yep, and I don't care about the stuff in my room.

Do you have any money in the bank or even a bank account for that matter? I asked.

Yeah, actually, I got a disability cheque deposited at around 9pm tonight, at the Royal Bank.

It's 4pm. We're almost at the next town. Why don't I drop you off there. You can go to the bank in the morning and the teller should be able to track down your account and the town you were living in. Or, maybe it's the hand of God reaching down and telling you to stop running away from the life you had and go home. Mike just looked over at me and nodded his head. He agreed that I should let him off in the next town. He needed another smoke, a bite to eat and a place to sleep for the night.

Three quarters of an hour later I signaled for the second turnoff to Edmundston New Brunswick. We made our way to the center of town and dropped him off in front of the Salvation Army Emergency Shelter. As he pulled himself out of the car and adjusted his shirt and crutches, I handed him a couple of twenties which he refused out of some sense of pride, turned and headed across the sidewalk to the Shelter.

I don't think he caught the similarity between his hometown and this one. I drove back onto the highway and in two hours I would pass through the city of Woodstock on the way to my new home.

A Butcher in Heat

Kevin Angelo Hehir

Oppressive. It's the only way to describe the stinking heat of South Western Ontario in the summer. You shower at night in hopes that you won't be as soaked as a linebacker with sweat before you even get to your underwear. Hot, sticky and oppressive was the kind of day that I set out to hitchhike from Ottawa to London.

Like most rides, I forgot his name only seconds after we exchanged them during the customary "hot enough for ya?" routine. The heat was enough to melt the memory right out of you. Like a cassette tape on a black dashboard in the sun. I do not recall his name but I do recall that he was a large man. His mass billowed to fill the space around the steering wheel. It was like someone had taken a huge tube of human and squeezed it into the driver's seat. Somewhere below his massive thighs there must have been feet working the pedals. I couldn't discern knees but the stick shift convinced me that somewhere down below was a clutch and a foot to operate it.

And the smell. He had just gotten off work at the meat department of a suburban A & P and debris from his trade grew out of his fingernails while caked blood covered his ball cap like a ring of spam jelly. I could only imagine his boots, but I'm sure I could smell them. None of this matters when hitching, as any one knows. Schedules and standards are two of the things you leave at home.

"So, do you pick up a lot of hitchhikers?" I asked.

He seemed to tense up and even expand a bit in his cramped cockpit. Then with a deep exhale from the well of his mass he begun.

"I used to pick up a lot more but once I picked up this girl. Tiny thing. Harmless enough I thought. Well, we're going along and she's not saying much and looking lost-like at all the road signs. Well, she reaches into her bag and I think that she's rooting for a hairbrush or an apple or something. Well, do you know what she hauls out of her bag? Can you guess what? A big knife, that's what. And the next thing I know she's waving it around and demanding that I turn my car around and take her to some place that I've never even heard of. 'O.K.', I says 'just calm down' I says, and before she can say another word I pull out into the other lane and just give'er. Fifteen hundred pounds of steel screaming down the highway.

She was too scared to even scream. We'd been seein' a lot of tractor trailers that day and road was pretty windy. So, I'm gunnin' er and I'm tellin' her to throw the fucking knife out the window and she does, quick too. So I slow down and get back in to the right lane then I pull over. I don't even have to tell her to get out. She's got the door open before I'm even stopped. Crazy she was." He took a breath and shook his head. "Yep, I know that this car at a high speed is all I'll need to protect myself."

I tried to reassure him, "Well you don't have to worry about me." I say.

"Huh, what do you mean?"

I continued, "I don't carry a knife.

"What" he says, "and you say you've hitched all over the country?"

I leaned back and adjusted my sunglasses. "Well," I started "I know that if anything weird happened, like some driver put his hand on my knee or tried to turn off where I wasn't going? I'm nuts enough to grab the steering wheel and give it a good yank. Just pull us into the ditch or maybe we'd just flip over. Who knows? Whatever, I'm not going anywhere I don't want to go."

He didn't even look at me. We just sat there in silence and rode out our time together. Two hours in the late summer sun of Southern Ontario with the heat rippling off yellow striped blacktop of the 401.

Visiting Mother!

C. Evans

It's Mother's Day and as I waited to catch my bus for the long ride to my mother's house I thought, what an inconvenience. And why do I always have to go to her anyway? I don't have a car and it takes up the little free time that I do have. Every year my brothers and sisters all gather at my Mom's house for a big family dinner. I am the only one not married so of course they all think that I have all this extra time on my hands. So I get up early on my only day off and go there early to help with the dinner preparations. It's the same every year, and I didn't have time to stop off and get her a card. Which will be something I will hear about from my siblings.

As the bus approaches, I think about all the work I have to do at home. I get on the bus and pick a seat beside a nice looking woman with a big bunch of flowers in her arms. As I sit down beside her she gives me a nice warm smile.

The bus ride is one and a half hours long so we strike up a conversation. She asks me if I am going to visit my Mother and I say yes and sigh. I immediately start in with the tirade of how inconvenient it is for me. I must have talked for at least forty-five minutes, mostly about how unreasonable my Mom can be and how she is always calling me and worrying about me and how it's always up to me to help her out when she needs it. I learn from the lady sitting next to me that she has two daughters, three sons and eight grandchildren. The time passes quickly and reaches up to signal a stop. I ask her if she is going to visit her Mother today, and she smiles and says "Yes."

I watch her get off the bus and cross the road. She goes through the gates of the cemetery. Yes, she is going to visit her Mother.

Ten Ladies Laughing

Daena Santorini

It was the dinner rush hour at our local eatery and my friend James and I were waiting for our meal to be served. Seated at the table next to us were ten ladies--all of whom appeared to be in their fifties and sixties, dressed up to the nines in various bright outfits. They were obviously in a celebratory mood as they laughed and talked with loud animation among themselves. Without realizing it I was watching them attentively, thinking about how much more fun they seemed to be having than the rest of the patrons in the restaurant, myself included.

When the waiter brought a huge cake, dripping with pink icing and burdened with glowing birthday candles, to the ladies' table they burst into a boisterous out-of-tune rendition of "Happy Birthday". A stout woman, dressed in a flaming orange-red pant suit and sporting an elaborate wig in the same hue, clasped her hands in front of her chest and squeezed her eyes shut tight. As she leaned to blow out the candles her companions responded with a round of vigorous applause and cheers.

My friend, who had been droning on about his golf or squash skills, or some such thing, caught on to my distraction. "Just listen to that," he said, obviously disgruntled by the whole situation. "What a bunch of old crows!"

"Pardon Me?" I choked, unprepared for such an uncharitable observation.

"A bunch of old biddies...look at 'em ...have you noticed that there are no men are with them? They probably all sent their husbands to an early grave with all that bleating!" he said, his lip curling derisively.

Really? They do seem to be rubbing you against the grain, don't they?" I responded, faking a soothing maternal tone.

"It is as if they could care less what the rest of us think!" James sputtered, with indignation.

"You are right. Absolutely. They don't seem to care at all." I said wistfully, recognizing how truly envious I was envious of these ten ladies laughing.

September Harvest

Deanna Santorini

There is autumn creeping in this air. I think it is time (I am inclined) to nest, but, no wait...I am out of feathers and straw. Better yet, I think it is time (I will intend) for new creation... plaster dust, apple crumb pie, painting on canvas and words. I dreamt that Sigmund, the neighborhood saint of schizophrenia, drove an old beat up brown Buick onto my front lawn. On the hood, scrawled in White Liquid Paper, was a quote- signed by me but I couldn't make out the words. Sigmund was anxious to take me somewhere, to show me something--but I woke up before the revelation could take place. In real life Sigmund scurries away when he sees me...to the Saint Of Schizophrenia, I am the Anti-Mary. Still, I look for him, watch for his Mussed Up Jesus image to appear on the street; hoping to catch what it is he mumbles to everyone but me. Maybe he knows what I have forgotten.

Testament to Grace

(from Ten Ladies Laughing)

Daena Santorini

You can see him out there almost everyday, walking and talking to himself endlessly. You can see him as insane, or you can see him as a prophet. I used to worry for him, wondering if anyone looks out for him, caring that he eats properly, reminding him to wear sun screen. I have wondered why he is touched by his particular affliction-- or magic as it may be. Now I think he is here as a testament to grace. As he walks past us, a light is shone on our souls whereby one can read what is written there; compassion or contempt, fear or acceptance.

Silver s Eye

Bruce Ross

The highlight of my public school-aged childhood was any of the frequent visits to my paternal grandfather s house in London, Ontario. My father had relocated to Rochester, New York before I was enrolled in kindergarten, but we visited grandfather at least several times a year. Grandfather, grandmother, and Uncle Izzie lived in a sprawling old house in the old part of town near the Thames River. The furniture was Russian-styled, with enormous beds and thick comforters.

The street in front of the house was made of cobblestone, and to my delight I was often hoisted onto the front seat of grandfather s wagon and taken for a ride with grandfather s horse Silver pulling the wagon. I often spent afternoons in the small barn at the back of the property staring at Silver and his giant eye facing me and smelling the perspiration glistening on his skin and the trampled down hay around him. I grew lost and hypnotized by the wisdom I could not understand in those still eyes.

Silver is long gone as are my grandparents, although Izzie hangs on with in-house care, but while attending graduate school many years later I lived with a reproduction of Rousseau s *La carriole du père Junier* on my wall. The image of a contented family sitting in a red and black wagon being drawn by a white horse commemorated my childhood s joy. Almost fifty years after that joy I found myself living in Alberta. I visited a living museum dedicated to Ukranian immigration into the Canadian prairie. There were working gardens, farm animals, sod huts, old homesteads, people in period costumes, general stores, and the like. There was something familiar about all this.

Heritage Park barn:
the unforgettable rich smell
of grandfather s horse

Remembering Olga Rechnitzer

The Diaries of Olga & Alexandra Rechnitzer

(previously published by EBIP)

124 Ridout Street London

Sunday January 02 1944

Fred called to thank me for the Christmas card, he had been in Montreal.

Monday January 03 1944

Got my exams, failed in three.

Tuesday January 04 1944

Went up town in the afternoon, met Fred but he stopped and talked to Phyllis Radyun. Went to see 'Girl Crazy'.

June 21 1947

Mum's wedding was very lovely. A small service in Colborne St. United Church and a small reception at Aunt Jean's and Eric's. The Mrs. Conolly arranged a surprise party at 124 Ridout St. and everyone was there. Mum and George left at 6pm for Toronto and then to Collingwood. Olga was ill that night and the next day. We drove to Port Stanley to see Ga-Ga and there Olga got a terrible headache. We are going to put her in the care of Dr. Bartram specialist and Dr. Simpson will work on the case together. I'm terribly worried about her.

Sunday January 09 1944

Gordie and Mr. Seigrest came over for dinner. We played cards and Gordie gave both Allis and I a New Years kiss - really nice.

Monday January 10 1944

Today, or rather tonight I went to the basketball game over at South. South Seniors against Navy. Fred was there and watched me quite a bit, but Iris Young was also there and did nothing but look at him. South lost 17-44. The Navy could really play. This weekend I am going to Katheryne Parkers. Also got a letter from Earl today.

Tuesday January 11 1944

Am going for my music lesson and to the library tonight.

June 24 1947

Have been inquiring about Olga and hear that she isn't so well again, but is going to Dr. Bartram tomorrow. I'm afraid his report won't be very good.

June 25 1947

Olga had a cardiograph today but Bartram says he will discuss results with Dr. Simpson before they will know.

January 13 1944

Today, Bob Douglas was announced dead.

Friday January 14 1944

Went to Strathroy to visit Kay Parker. Dick Pencombe and Bob Osteryard came over and we danced. About 4:30 we went down into town and had something to eat. Bob is cute, an American, soon to join the US Air Force.

June 26 1947

Called London to see how Olga was and Jane McPherson who is staying there tonight says Olga's face is swollen and headaches are still bad - Paul and I are driving down tonight to stay until Mum gets back.

June 27 1947

Stayed with Olga all last night and will sleep in her room tonight. She is very sick and I don't think Simpson is paying enough attention to her condition. I got next to no sleep and was terribly tired today. Dr. is coming tomorrow.

January 15 1944

We went skating at night until around ten o'clock. We went back to Kathryn's and changed our clothes so that we could go dancing at the town hall.

Went dancing and had lots of fun. Bob had the habit of chewing the back of my hair on my forehead. Went out to eat afterwards then we went home. I hope to see him again and I hope he comes to London soon.

Sunday January 16 1944

Slept late at Parkers, came home on the 5:45. Went out for dinner with Mr. Seigrest and mom. Baskette and Doug Knowles were there.

Monday January 17 1944

Slept in this morning. Went to school this afternoon, thrilled to pieces because of Bob Osteryard. Got the front of my hair feather-cur. Mom went down town on the bus with Fred. He told mom that his brother Erwin had a baby boy.

June 28 1947

Spoke to Simpson on phone yesterday and he shocked me by saying that Olga had only a year to go - maybe less. I can't believe it - yet instinctively know it's maybe less. Why didn't he warn us of such a dangerous condition? He saw Olga today and told her she was to have "no visitors". She has sub-acute oedema now and blood pressure has been as high as 220. He said three years ago he put her life span at about 28. Why didn't he tell us then how serious it was? Mum came home but wasn't told the whole story.

June 30 1947
George knows everything and is going to see the Dr. soon. Paul and I stayed at Aunt Jean's and Eric's Sunday and I took a sleeping pill. Everything reminds me of Olga and I wish we had done many more things together. I love her so much and life will not be nearly as gay and worthwhile when she goes. If only I could convey to her how much I love her.

Thursday January 20 1944

Alice got her hair cut very short to-day, almost feather-cut - It looks real cute. Went to Labatts to-day and saw all my old friends in the mailing department. It was fun seeing them again.

July 02 1947

We got home today July 02, Tuesday and are going to London tomorrow. Einer got a dachshund puppy for Olga because we told him she wanted one. We will deliver it tomorrow and will stay until Friday evening.

Friday January 21 1944

Saw G.P. today, didn't thrill me in the least. Stayed home to-night to clean silver. K. Parker came up with D.P. to go to the movie. Dick said he would give Bob, my love and I told him to bring Bob up to London some time. Gee I was thrilled.

August 08 1947

Olga has been sick on and off all during July. Not too bad though. She left with Uncle Eric for Bayfield today - The trip may do her some good.

August 10 1947

Olga was sick in Bayfield. She didn't tell Aunt Jean how really bad she was.

August 12 1947

Olga has improved a bit and is enjoying her stay in Bayfield.

August 23 1947

Olga not very well all during this month. Has spells of feeling alright and then gets a headache. Bob McBride is very attentive and he is someone to aide Olga over "until I get well enough to find someone else" she says.

Friday February 18 1944

To-day I phoned up Fred and asked him if he would like to go to the co-ed dance this year. Much to my amazement he said yes and he also said he would give me a ring to-morrow around one o'clock.

September 08 1947

Olga has another uraemia attack and this time will likely be the last. Paul and I in London for the

weekend (6&7) and I stayed on to look after Olga. Her face is a bit swollen, but not much. Headaches unbearable.

September 09 1947

Got two nurses in to look after Olga. She knew Dorry quite well as Bob used to take her out. Olga starting to want bed-pan but kidneys not functioning. Head bad. Dr. ordered Morphine pills but they don't seem to agree with her.

September 10 1947

Olga removed to hospital. I went in ambulance with her. She can't see awfully well. Is terribly brave and still has great faith.

September 11 1947

Olga's face very swollen and neck the same way. She wanted a mirror but we wouldn't give her one. Headache not as bad. Pantapone has been substituted for Morphine and seems to work better. Mum and I are with her constantly - doing it on shifts. Dr. Simpson delayed to call Dr. Brian but finally did. Brian very nice and explained how a good kidney acts nephritis and goes to uraemic stage. Simpson told Olga may go any time if a blood vessel breaks. Blood pressure was 260 today! Temperature quite high. Olga perspires a lot now on the forehead. Sleeps a lot. Was delirious on the 11th but clear-headed now. Swelling not as bad, but she told me she had been wrong in believing she would recover. Talks about dying a lot. Breathing very labored now. Tonight they gave her Oxygen which only frightened her and did no good. She has very little time left.

Saturday February 19 1944

Fred called about a quarter to two and we talked only for about fifteen minutes. He was then going skiing so that we had to cut the conversation.

September 15 1947

Chest is filling up with fluid. Mum and I are with her from 1 o'clock on until 6:30 - when Olga died. She was unconscious for about an hour or so before death. She was too sweet and young to die. I don't think there is a kind God anywhere.

September 17 1947

Olga's body and face look beautiful now. She got so many flowers and people are all saying "goodbye" to her.

Funeral today. Olga has gone, but my first little girl will be named Olga Isabel and I will tell her a great deal about my other own dear Olga.

Monday August 07 1944

Today is my birthday - I am eighteen!

When The Heart Parts

Penn Kemp

WHEN THE HEART PARTS originated in notes I took at the bedside in the Intensive Care Unit at University Hospital, London, Ontario. After my father, Jim Kemp, died, I wrote the performance piece about the last week of his life when machines shocked him back to life six times.

Jim was a well-known painter in the fifties, instrumental in setting up the art scene in London. Though he had to stop exhibiting because of ill health, he kept on painting. Jim's pictures show the progression from fear of death in heavy haunting images through a gradual acceptance of fate to an embrace of light in the water colours of his last two years.

Jim was a gunnery officer and bomb disposal expert for the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II. A war baby, I was ten when he had his first massive coronary and the bomb detonated, in our safe little city, far from wartime England. Because of his imagination and his heart condition, my father was both the source of magic and the source of impending doom. Love and terror conjoined. The atmosphere of the Intensive Care Unit is intense, indeed.

The scene outside at Emergency was just like on TV. I pulled the car up, put my hand on the horn and honked and honked. The security guy must have seen me and buzzed someone. In a minute, half a minute, in a second, everyone was running. You know they have a cardiac arrest unit always on call?

One nurse did the heart resuscitation on his chest and the other guy did mouth to mouth. Jim really was gone, then he was just gone. He looked absolutely terrible. He looked dead. They pulled him out of the car onto the ground and started resuscitating right there. When others came rushing out with the stretch, the nurse and the other guy just jumped right on the stretcher and kept on working. It was really wonderful, you know. They didn't have to ask they just knew. They never let go all that time. They didn't give up. They were working so hard.

When they got him into Emergency, they cut his clothes open, cut them to ribbons to get at his chest. His good coat: we had just been to see Aunt Dina. He always did like talking to her. A touch of the Old Country. They kept telling me not to be alarmed they had to do it. They stuck the clothes into a plastic bag with his name on. I should get into that bag and throw the clothes into the garbage. The garbage goes tomorrow.

They gave him electric shock and his heart started beating though he was still out. They moved him upstairs to the Intensive Care Unit as fast as they could, to get him on the machines, the life support system. They were really marvelous; someone reported what was happening every two minutes. They kept me right in touch no matter what they were doing.

A minister sat with me down there in Emergency. He too was on the cardiac team. So was a social worker, a grief worker she called herself. She came up in the elevator with me all the way to the Waiting Room.

February 24

We wait all night for the plane I want to hire but it turns out to be grounded so my partner drives me home from Mount Madawaska. Across Algonquin Park to London, we discuss how to pay for our new canoe and where we'll trip with the kids come July. We ride close, watching the tilt of landscape fling memories back to mind. We drive by the frame cottage on Smoke Lake where my family paddled that summer before dad's first heart attack. All the plans for camping we made then for the summer to follow. We did not canoe together again. No more boats for dad. The endless, timeless trip stands still, continues still. Mounds of snow muffle our movement. We will never arrive. Will we never arrive?

Snows give way to the monochrome of early spring in muted miles. My father is dying in a field of colours. I do not know when or if I will reach him in what we call time. He is flying, floating out beyond the spectrum, through the ring of fire, beyond the last wave.

How is he? I am afraid to call, afraid to stop. Momentum keeps me protected. Roll on, wavy Navy, I chant as a sea dirge to sustain him. When finally from a call box I phone and phone, there is no answer. I hold no hope.

London is suddenly upon us. The street where I grew up, now a small extension north of University Hospital, where dad is now lying, in what condition, I don't know, don't want to know, not quite yet. My partner drops me off. He must return to work immediately. He prefers not to think about death, about illness.

Nobody home. I know where the key is hidden and let myself into the soft, dark air of the familiar living room. The house will wait with me until my mother and brother return from the hospital, until they walk home with their news. On the walls, dad's pictures wait, prescient as dreams. His women sombrely painted in deep crimson oil lower their hooded eyes.

His images bear the imprint of the Lady or her emblem: shell, moth or fish. Out in the studio, dad's latest, last water colours blast through all colour into realms of pure. I wander the house, its still life. Soft acrylics trace the line of my mother's spine, the fold of her cheek. Pan in cadmium red plays his wild pipes.

In the basement of early wartime paintings, white walls of fear break the perilous silence before vows. Behind these shrouds stands the White Goddess. She is the pure fear dad felt when a buzz bomb caught him on an English street against a white wall just before my birth. Counting the ten-nine-eight dangerous seconds before the bomb exploded, he knew the presence. There was no escape. That terror lit the walls of my mother's womb. That presence stayed with him through the navy years he spent detonating bombs, the peace-time he spent bashing against the monolithic walls of London Life. Insurance.

The bomb did not go off until dad hit forty, when his heart exploded in what the doctor called coronary thrombosis, coronary infarction. Humming with the kettle, I boil water and set out our favourite teacups. The front door opens.

Mother, son and daughter, we drink cup after cup of tea too hot for the tongue. We throw on coats and tramp back and forth, over the bridge between house and hospital. Buffeted by March winds, cloud banks storm across the sky. The sun breaks through; the sun sets. Our watches are not set. Our pace is brisk. We forget how to sleep. Rest and the rest might be easier, reminds the griefworker.

March 9

When the family arrive, mom is ready. We're going to have this nice tiny private funeral. And the grandchildren can all come. My boy is saying he wants to visit London, so keep someone alive down there. Nanny: I can visit her. Kids are that brash. They don't have any concept of life, they're completely selfish. That's just what Nanny needs. Some little gaffer to pick up after, to look after. I don't think I've been too demanding. I just don't want to do the dishes. I'm up and down like a nothing. Why am I so tired? It's so silly. A heart attack seems like something jumps on your heart. Why did he have to die, Nanny? I don't know. He just spent too much energy at work. When you get older like daddy and me, you're going to die and you're going to be ready for it. I can't wait to see Jamie's new baby. Life goes on: you know what I mean? One comes; one goes. But we're still the same number. *WHEN THE HEART PARTS* is published in a longer version in *FOUR WOMEN*, by Red Kite Press.

Tragedy

John David McGuffin

It was a cold Christmas in the winter of 1996. The dark early winter nights brought on the severely cold temperatures to the City of London. I was finishing my third year at Montcalm Secondary School. Up until now the year was uneventful. When we gathered for Christmas my girlfriend spent the afternoon and evening with me. Christmas was an event I enjoyed with my girlfriend and family. We had a lot of parties to go to. Besides that, life was one of doing homework, going to school and spending time with my friends that winter. We had a lot of parties to go to. After the Christmas vacation was when that fateful morning happened.

On Friday 23rd we were let out of school for Christmas. That night we had a hockey game to play. We showed up for the game at Carling arena. My mom, dad and brother were there to watch the game. Emily was waiting for me after we got our hockey uniforms on. We made our way onto the ice. We skated to our positions. The hockey game began and we played to win. The other team got a goal in the first three minutes. Then we got two and they got two. The score board showed 3-2 with about 2 minutes left in the game. The referee blew his whistle while dropping the puck on the rink. I fought for the puck. Getting control of it I passed the puck to Tony who moved it up the rink. He passed it to Steven and then to Brent who took a shot on goal. It went in. I was oblivious to the cheers of the crowd, I relaxed and waited for the overtime to start. We skated to the center for the face off. Again the referee blew his whistle and the puck was dropped. The game was now into overtime. One of our players was put into the penalty box. We played hard and then a slap shot from Brent broke the tie when it went in. We then played a ferocious game. Finally Brent got a break away and put the puck into the net. A couple of minutes passed and the horn blew. The hockey game was over and we had won. We were doing well.

We left the rink and were received by our families. I made my way to the changing room. Sitting on one of the benches I untied my skates and changed into my usual clothes. We left and got into our cars. Emily, Angela, Brent, and I drove to Cadillac Jack's, a restaurant and dance hall along Richmond row. We stayed for a while drinking, eating, dancing and talking. We got into our cars and left. Emily had played the piano at local recitals throughout the city. She was about to go to Laurier to play the next day. If I was able to, I was going to try to be there the next day in fact to watch her play.

Afterwards we went to Fanshawe Lake to go cross-country skiing around the lake. It was a clear night with a full moon. The snow sparkled like water on a lake. It was a crisp cold night with no wind blowing. We took our skis from the roof of the car then put them on. We skied along the lake. We passed first the golf course then the beach. We stopped at Pioneer Village and fed the horses. We made our way through the campsite. We skied along the road over the dam and onto the blue loop of the Thames Valley Trail. We traveled for a good half-hour along the trail. We went to an opening at the river where we would cross. Let's take the entire trail around the lake shouted Brent at the last of the pack. It was a long way around the lake. The lake is about 35km. So we headed along the river to the Thorndale Bridge and made our way through the woods, getting back by sunrise. Then I drove the other three home and went home myself.

The next day was the day before Christmas. I tried to get some homework done, sleeping part of the day. Mom was getting things ready for tomorrow's Christmas dinner. I had given up on homework for a couple of days and decided to do some Christmas wrapping. Wrapping presents was enjoyable at this time of year. The next day would be Christmas and we would open our presents later in the morning letting Emily and my brother's girlfriend be with us. That evening I called my friends to wish them a happy Christmas, then I turned in for the night.

The next morning came. I awoke late. I got on a pair of jeans and a shirt and waited for the others to be ready. We sat around and took turns opening gifts. I had brought Emily a set of the china she was collecting. I had gotten clothes, a hand plane, and a pair of snowshoes. After all the gifts had been unwrapped, we sat down for the Christmas meal. We talked about school and what was going on in the

community. Afterwards we went for a walk down at Victoria Park to see the lights. We made angels in the snow and skated until midnight.

That morning and afternoon I slept. At seven o'clock I awoke thinking to myself I had to get some studying done. To my surprise Emily knocked on the door. My mother drove over to the K-mart so I decided to come with her explained Emily. We went into the living room and lied cuddling on the couch. The wind howled outside as a winter storm snowed on London. The city was being snowed in. As the snow fell drifts were enclosing the city's roads and I would have to walk Emily home that evening. Next week for a few days Emily would be gone to her Grandfather's home in Guelph. I would have a few days to myself to study for school.

Dreaded Monday came with the sound of an alarm clock ringing. I lied there motionless unable to face the start of a school day. Ten minutes had passed then I finally got out of bed. I showered and got ready for school. Leaving in my car I drove to school. Montcalm school the one place I never wanted to be and wanted never to return to after my first class was over. I went out to the smoking patio. A few of my friends were there. We talked for a while then the bell rang.

We went inside to our first class, math, and I didn't know any of it. It was difficult for me to know the answers to the questions and there were many. We then filed into the classroom where we sat down. We were working away when the principal called me to the principal's office. Mom was in the principal's office waiting for me. I entered and sat down. I started to worry.

There's been an accident. It was Emily and her father. They had a collision in Kitchener, with great anguish my mother said.

A terrible sense of sheer horror surged through my body. As if somebody had emptied me of all my emotions, filling me with bitter anger, frustration, sadness, and despair were among the emotions brought out of me. Emerging from me were other hidden expressions of my emotions, inside of me, ready to explode if given the opportunity. I slumped over in my chair and started crying. Tears streamed down my face. I cried out in mournful anger. My mother put her hand on my shoulder to console me. She too was crying.

I am going to take you home now, she said.

You don't have to worry about school until after the funeral, the principal spoke up and said. You can have the next week off or however long it takes.

As I walked through the halls the other students wondered what was going on with me. My chest hurt my arms and legs were numb. I wanted to scream out, do anything to relieve the pain but I held as much of it as I could back. Driving home I didn't want to move from the seat. I asked if we could just go for a long drive in the countryside. That night I could hardly sleep sitting up most of the night locked in rage and anger. The next day was the funeral. I had been asked to be a pallbearer and to stand in the line to greet people. It was such a sad funeral. They went so young. There was so much more for them to do in their lives.

Failure At Last

Ted DeMarsh

He approached it for the last time, head down, eyes closed. As his tears fell between the open blades of the wire cutters, he groped inside the casing to find the remaining whole wires, bundled them together and cut.

He opened his eyes.

The embedded green light smiled steadily on.

READY...

He collapsed against the desk, throwing the cutters so hard the blades remained open, shattering the window on their exit from the room and forever confirming in the minds of a hapless family of squirrels that there are truly no safe heights.

In his mind he saw Clarene and the kids running from him, angry, ashamed, accusatory. He lay his head on his arms and saw his reflection in it's stainless steel casing. "You couldn't just leave well enough alone. You had to push it. Again."

And everything had been going so well for Leonard. He'd been with this company eleven years and had risen high. It was his to lose, as they say, and he was preparing to lose it.

He'd been the one to work up the initial diagrams so he was trusted with engineering the first model that was based on them. He'd chosen it's materials, overseen it's fabrication. He'd approved, disapproved, approved, disapproved, approved, disapproved until he was pleased with it. Then, past pleased, until he was content.

His colleagues stood by, talking behind their hands, noting his effort and determination. He'd begun to be published in respected journals and was soon being asked to collaborate with others on work in related fields. His past disgrace (the REAL fuel, he knew) receded into the distance, forgotten. Ultimately and inevitably, the letter came informing him of his nomination for that year's mightiest award. The biggest prize and the highest.

"You lucky s.o.b."

"Great work."

"Way to go, Len."

"Remember us when..."

He'd begun to allow himself to feel the way his friends already felt about him. Proud. Clarene discovered a new interest in him and in sex with him. He discovered he liked that. His children finally began to make friends with other children, who suddenly seemed to find them worth knowing. Life, as everyone else knew it, was turning his way at last.

Until tonight. The night before the award. The night he'd added that one last piece of copper wire, adjusted that frequency, fused that link.

And it worked.

And it wouldn't stop working.

And, once again, he was about to be humiliated in front of the whole world.

He'd tried taking the copper wire out but it continued to work. He'd adjusted the frequency back to an earlier setting. It continued to work. He'd snipped away furiously with the wire cutters and it continued to hum pleasantly on, waiting to begin the work it had been designed to do. He'd become desperate, spinning all the dials, unhooking this and reconnecting it to that, tearing out all the blue wires and adding more white ones. He even painted the outside casing an ugly shade of orange and did a bad job of it.

It purred at him and waited cheerfully for orders. Now, in the middle of the night, exhausted and miserable, he gave up and went home.

Before he left, he discovered he couldn't even turn it off.

He climbed into bed beside Clarene, who, wide awake, rolled over and began to brush his chest

with her fingernails.

"Ready for tomorrow?" she whispered, touching his earlobe with the tip of her tongue.

"It works."

Silence. All stop.

"What?"

She pushed just a little bit away from him. Her fingernails stopped their slide.

"It works. It works perfectly. It won't stop working just fine."

"No, Len. It can't. You're just nervous."

"I even think it's grateful."

"You wouldn't. Not... again."

And there they were. Not again. The internal, eternal, echo of those words he'd gripped like climbing rope and here they were rushing through his grasp, once more becoming gallows thread.

The fingernails started to bite.

"Take it apart. Pour something hot into the holes on top."

"I tried. I tried everything. It's been invented and it wants to start."

"What about tomorrow? The prize?"

"I know."

"You know?? What if it works tomorrow?"

Her voiced slid under the door and partway down the hall.

"I should have just left it alone."

"You kept at it when you knew it wasn't working just fine?" Her voice slid around the corner and through the cracks in the children's door. They woke from pleasant dreams and started imagining a familiar future without friends.

"Why? All those years of failure and you throw them away." She rolled away.

He stared at the broken clock on the chipped wall opposite the out of level, unstable bed.

"Because, for a while, it felt good."

He dreamt he was a boy. He watched as the boy worked at unrealizing one imagined thing after another. He'd lay his hands, his intelligence and his instinct on them, and they would activate and begin functioning before his eyes. Even in the dream, he despaired of his successes. He watched the celebrated failures around him and tried to copy them. To learn from them. Until he would be driven away by their derisive laughter and sometimes, their suspicion.

He had a knack and the world told him that the only way to break a boy of his knack was with discipline. So he dreamt of the discipline he needed and then started to practice it. Discipline, then practice, discipline, then practice until, at last, he started to fail. Small failures at first, keeping pace with small attempts. Greater attempts soon led to greater failures, and then the weight of the discipline and the hoard of failures converged and began to work together. He began to receive early warning of something he was about to do that might fix a problem, correct an error, right a wrong. He avoided and he conquered, until his intelligence surrendered for the sake of survival, and his instinct died.

He woke up and stared at the ceiling knowing one thing above everything else. He had earned that prize.

The awards dinner had been delicious, everything over or under done to perfection. The wine had gone off just enough, an insulting little Chardonnay, and the Baked Alaska was almost liquid when served. He wished his wife was there to enjoy it with him.

He'd gotten up that morning and gone to the lab. With closed eyes and crossed fingers he'd opened the door. It might as well have been sitting there panting, stick in its mouth, it was so ready to play, so eager to run. He closed the door and went home. His wife had gone. At his scratched desk in the corner, he spent the rest of the day working on his declination speech for that night.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, this year's winner, Leonard Dacard."

Applause, applause, hand shakes, elbow squeezes as he works his way between the tables to the front. He pulls out his notes and begins, his voice carrying beyond the broken microphone to the room.

"We share a common history of failure. We look back and we know that in everything we attempt, we fail. We spend our lives in collision with our friends, our families, ourselves. The things we build to last, collapse. Yesterday's art fails to move us today. We rip page after unfinished page from our typewriters. Canvas after canvas we tear up and discard. Note after note we foul, when our voices lift in song. Plan after plan we conceive, attempt, abandon. What we offer to each other in hope we reject, misunderstand, mistrust and attack. We are meant to fail, and we do. This is history's most important lesson, and we ignore it at our peril. I have struggled to learn it."

Applause.

"Success is an aberration, a fluke, a lucky draw. Success is the surprise. It can deceive us into thinking that heroes are born for heroics. That scientists move relentlessly towards revelation and artists slip lightly and with familiarity, into grace. That builders inevitably rise. Illusion, and I have tried to see through it."

Fuller applause, coughing, a sip or two of water.

"I have failed."

A big hand, table pounding and at the odd table, tears come to some eyes.

"You misunderstand."

The young, brash ones jump to their feet. Clapping, cheers.

"Please... Please..."

The room settles. He looks over their heads and at the back of the room, the door opens. His wife comes in, her dress torn, her hair wild. She is carrying something large, something heavy. Lifeless, it's wires dangle from it's blackened and shattered casing. She begins to move through the tables towards him.

"We all fail. It's what we do best."

She is standing right in front of him, holding it. He takes it from her hands and lifts it over his head. He shakes it violently, and as the shattered pieces inside it tumble and scrape, he looks at her. She is smiling, angry, proud, and through the roaring approval, her hope finally reaches him.

He smiles.

"Live with it."

Martha Henry's Secret

Ted DeMarsh

Peter Cassal is fast approaching the despair shingles feel in a building wind, convinced that he has memorized only the first three lines of the scene he studied for this audition.

The script is rolled up, tubular, and though it is clingingly damp from the sweat off his hands, it will not be unreadable until he has settled it's geometry by unrolling and then rolling it back up several more times. Flushed, unhappy, he begins the scene again, creating the bedroom in his mind, watching her smoking on the bed, starting from the top and delivering his lines to the angry but eager young woman he sees within him.

He gets to the same place, the end of line three, when the door to the audition room opens. Someone his age and gender, clearly a competitor, stands in the half open door laughing with the director and the director's assistant, bouncing a shared memory to each other, laughing, shaking hands.

"It's really good to see you again"

The director says this to the young man and Peter can tell he means it.

"For sure. Me too."

His competition walks away smiling as the director turns back into the audition hall. The assistant has also been smiling, hanging at the periphery of these old friends. Now serious, she looks around the room at those waiting.

"James Williams?"

The pretty young man across the room, leaning over and chatting up the dark haired girl, turns.

"Hi, that's me."

"Hi. Please come in."

"Thanks."

James Williams leans in to kiss the girl on the cheek.

"Wish me luck."

"Be great."

She sends it reflexively back, seeming to mean it.

Peter doesn't know anyone in the room, so he understands that when he is called he will have nothing to tear himself away from except the wall he is leaning against. A lonely awkward moment, and it will happen in front of people he dreads being awkward in front of. He clings to the one redemptive rule that can save him, to deliver a breath-taking performance when he's finally called.

So, for once last time he prays, he unrolls the script. He looks at the page, reassured to see that it is indeed the same scene as when he last looked. He scans the text. Yes, child that he is, he does know the words. He should toss the page away right now and trust himself and his emotional memory. He begins the monologue again, sotto voce, and gets to the end of the third line. Full mental stop.

He says it again, frustrated.

"I know we'd agreed, but why this late?"

He knows they agreed, but why this late? He KNOWS they AGREED, but why THIS LATE? Wait, it'll come... Nothing. Back to the script.

"Did you think the shadows could cover the sin?"

Right. HOW could she think the SHADOWS could COVER SIN? He knew that line. If he was really doing the scene, if he was walking, talking, pointing, staring with desperate purpose, he would have remembered it and would even now be driving to the end, boiling it off. That's what he needs to do, he needs to step out of the room and run through the scene once, full electric tilt.

He pushes off the wall and looks around. Why is no-one else in this room rehearsing their monologues? The dark haired actress has moved to the couch to talk to the older woman who has been sitting there quietly since he came in. They're sharing the one magazine that was left in the room by mistake. They're laughing, pointing at pictures. For all they seem to care, they could be waiting to catch

a bus home. He looks at the other actors here. If they're rehearsing, perfecting their scenes, they're doing it by meditative practice. One is leaning against the opposite wall with his eyes closed. The other two sit in chairs that are too close together ignoring each other, staring separately into space. If they don't care, well, he does, so off to the hallway to run the scene.

He is heading for the hall door, opening it, when the door into the audition space opens behind him. The assistant is letting James Williams out.

Who offers to shake.

"Thanks. It felt good."

She beams back at him, possibly never having been offered a handshake before.

"Thank you."

James Williams heads for the door that Peter is holding open. He winks at the dark haired actress on the way by and sends her thumbs up. He moves past Peter into the hall, accepting the doorman service.

"Thanks."

Peter looks back into the room. The assistant is staring at him.

Smiling? No.

"We won't be much longer getting to you if you can stay."

No, thinks Peter. No, no, no, don't be mad at me I was just going to...

"I was just going to..."

She doesn't care, she has had enough of actors like him.

"Please be patient. We're going as fast as we can."

"Sure. Yes, I understand. Sure."

This is humiliation, a real, full blown emotion, but shit, he can't use it in the scene. In the scene he is **RIGHTEOUS SURETY TRIUMPHANT**. He now has farther than ever to go to get there.

The assistant sees the women on the couch.

"Nancy?"

The assistant is almost embarrassed to clip the bond the dark haired actress has formed with the older woman on the couch.

"Me?"

Dark haired beauty smile.

"You."

Big smile back. We've been lover's in another life, mixed with, I wish you were my sister, warmth. The dark haired actress gets up from the couch, ignores the older woman who would have liked to wish her luck, and crosses to the assistant.

"How is he?"

She whispers conspiratorially to the assistant as she passes. Meaning, the director. Meaning, inside info, please.

"Too much red meat."

The assistant whispers it back, rolling her eyes, closing the door. Meaning, don't speak unless spoken too and curtsy on the way out. The door closes.

Peter has stood frozen at the door until they disappear inside. Rehearsing in the hallway is still a very good idea that he will, no way, not on your life, do. He crosses back to the wall, tries a casual lean. He is so tense, in thirty seconds his right shoulder cramps.

He opens the script. There is a vast black pool in the middle of the page where words used to live. What his sweat has joined together no man will tear asunder for the purposes of consideration, or comprehension. He now has a crumpled, damp, piece of garbage to deal with and for some reason known only to theatre custodians, audition waiting rooms don't seem to require waste baskets.

And finally he gets his first break. From the beginning things have been spinning too fast, at too extreme a pitch for him to grab and hold on. He had come to the audition packed like gunpowder with emotion, and the grains he has been spilling all over have been igniting in the air.

He carefully folds the script into a neat, flat, sheet. Simple. Done. He reaches behind himself and it slides smooth, the way paper can sometimes do over denim, into his back pocket. He lets go the breath he has been holding since he stepped on the elevator to come up here.

The woman puts the magazine she's now reading alone down on the couch. She crosses her hands on her lap and looks at him.

"Better?"

He nods.

"Ready?"

He smiles.

The door opens. Dark hair and the assistant cheek kiss inside the frame. Dark hair leaves and the assistant checks her dance card.

"Peter Cassal?"

He pushes off the wall and heads into the pit. He looks over his shoulder as he crosses the threshold, to the woman sitting calmly on the couch.

She places one finger vertically across her mouth, and gently, certainly, hands her secret to him.

"Shhhhuushh..."

Which he keeps in his head, past the introductions and the chat, past the climb to the stage. He looks for it inside, finds and tracks it like a fuse, following the smoking burn down to his internal artillery, feeling it reach dry powder exactly at the moment he's ready.

Looking past the lights, the waiting silence, and his heart's desire, he embraces fire for the first time, and unbinds his heat.

The Sleeping Ducks

BF Gardner

Once upon a time in the land of Mondohunkamooga*, there ran a quiet river that wound its way through a large green field, lined with big trees. In the river, in the field, which ran through the land with the long name, there were hundreds of ducks floating in the water. It was night. The ducks were asleep. In the land of Mondohunkamooga, there lived a mean old man who spent all of his spare time, when he wasn't picking his nose and poking small furry animals with his cane, screaming at the ducks in the river, which ran through the field, through the land with the long name. He was rather stinky and there were small furry animal blood stains on his cane.

One night when the ducks were asleep a red-haired lady rode by on her bicycle and saw the mean old man sitting on the edge of the river yelling at the ducks. She had a cold and couldn't smell anything within 15 feet of her bicycle seat. She thought he was a magic man -- the fog just rolled in, did not get anywhere near the man, and parted in great whirls every time he raised his arms and yelled at the ducks, who were sleeping in the water that ran through the field, through the land with the long name. (We know it was the BO but she had a cold and couldn't smell anything) She thought he was a mean magic man. She threw her bicycle on the grass and walked up to the mean old man who was screaming at the ducks who were sleeping in the water, which ... well, you know the rest.

The old man didn't hear her approaching and didn't see her pick up a thick blade of grass and place it between her thumbs, stretching it tight and putting it up to her mouth. She was just a couple of feet behind the mean old man, took a deep breath and blew air across the blade of grass. The high-pitched sound echoed all over the land. She blew the thumb whistle three times as loud as she could, got on her bicycle and rode off quickly into the fog that had rolled up from the river in the field in the land of Mondohunkamooga.

Meanwhile, back on the river s edge, after hearing this ear-piercing whistle from behind him, the mean old man froze, his arms raised high in the air and his hair stood up on end and turned pure white like the fog that wouldn't come near him because of the smell. The fog disappeared, and the ducks and everyone else for three blocks woke up. The ducks flew away and the mean old man fell over, hit his head on a rock and died. Then he rolled down the bank of the quiet river and into the water and that was the last time anyone saw or heard of the mean old man who never bathed and was rather stinky, who spent all of his spare time screaming at the ducks in the river, which ran through the field, through the land of Mondohunkamooga. But it wasn't the last time anyone heard of the young woman on the bicycle. She would be riding into yet another tale in the land with the long name.

The Veiled Threat: (fable #2)

BF Gardner

Etoile Coeurange was a young woman who lived in the land of Mondohunkamooga. A land where the sky seemed to darken more at sunrise than at sunset and Etoile had a longing in her heart that she did not understand.

Etoile lived with her three brothers in a small red house on the hill overlooking the valley of the veiled threat. The veiled threat was a large hairless beast that came out of its hole in April and bit the people of Mondohunkamooga on the butt. It was always hiding in the ground, waiting for the security of winter when it could finally sleep.

The three brothers all slept at the foot of the only bed in the house so that their sister would have the best that they could offer -- and Etoile Coeurange was happy with this arrangement. She would never share her bed space with anyone -- including family.

The sun seemed darkest just around lunch time. The steam from the kettle cast a wall of moisture on the panes of glass, but Etoile, who was getting tired of spending all of her time at home - just wiped it aside as she did with all things that got in her way and poured herself a cup of tea. She looked out over the land of Mondohunkamooga and saw a vision. It was in a ray of sunshine which landed right in her eyes, blinding her for a brief moment. It had reflected off the water in the river that ran through the fields that made up the valley of the veiled threat.

Etoile Coeurange thought she recognized the vision and after her sight came back, was happy and filled with a glad heart. She went outside where her three brothers and their friends were building castles in the sand and playing with toy dragons. She raised her hands in the air, rejoiced, sang and ran down the hill in front of their house to the river that ran through the fields in the land of Mondohunkamooga. When she got to the river, she looked for the ray of sunshine, but its reflection was so great that she could not tell if it was real. She knelt down by the river's edge and looked into the reflecting pool filled with the colored leaves of Fall.

What she saw scared her. She ran back up the hill to the comfort of her house, her brothers and her plush feather bed and buried her face in the pillows. When she looked up, many months had passed - it was the beginning of March. She felt as if a part of her life had been stolen from her. Etoile Coeurange ran back into the open air - which was cold now - and down to the river to find the lost ray of light, but she searched and searched for a long time only to find her own reflection in the melting ice that turned into water as the spring arrived and as she took one last look into the river the veiled threat rushed out of his hole in the ground and bit her on the butt.

Boy, was she mad - she was really pissed off- she reached around, grabbed the veiled threat, shoved it under the water until it dissolved into nothing and she was left staring at that thing that had scared her in the first place - the deep dark secret world of the evil twins: love and commitment. Etoile Coeurange struck at the water with her fist. After the water settled she saw her normal reflection and she was happy again. She walked up the hill that overlooked the valley of the ... well since there was no more veiled threat, it was just her valley so she walked proudly up the hill to the house.

*(Harris Park)

Short Index of Weekend with Lake Erie:

a love affair

Cornelia Hoogland

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My Love Affair With London

Marlene Stead

I was born in the city that I love and will probably die and be buried here but I will certainly carry many wonderful memories with me that I wouldn't have missed for a minute. There are so many that it is hard to find space to recall all of them. They might not mean as much to some but to me they are my legacy.

Let us start at the beginning which is always the best place to start. I was born on Feb. 2, 1934 at St. Joseph's hospital, the only one of five children to hold the honour of having a hospital birth. My parents and four siblings lived in a brick cottage on Ontario Street between Lorne and Princess Avenues. It was a working class neighborhood where in the evenings, folks congregated on their front porches or leant over their back fences admiring each other's gardens. Obviously there were no television sets in those days.

My father was a CP railroad engineer as were most of the other people on the street. Others were employed by McCormicks, Kellogg's or at the Coca-Cola plant which resided where McCulloch's costumes is now. I remember going there on a school trip once where we watched the bottling line and afterwards received a 5 cent bottle of coke free. My best friend was Loretta. She was one of twelve children and her father was employed by CP. Whenever anyone wanted to see the other we would just stand outside the house and call out the name ten or more times before each other appeared. That is what everybody else did on the street. No one ever thought of disturbing the family by ringing their doorbell. In the evenings the kids on the block would gather beneath the street lights and play ball or tag. Sometimes we would bicycle up to the corner of Ontario and Dundas to Marsh's Bakery where you could buy the biggest double dip ice-cream cone for five cents. There the aromas of London East would fill the air. McCormicks and, Kellogg's cereal and the fried onions cooking for the best hot dogs and hamburgers imaginable at Lewis's restaurant. Combine that with the crisp fall air when the Western Fair was on and you were in heaven.

Another excursion would involve walking down to the Jumbo dairy at Waterloo and Dundas where you could purchase wonderful ice-cream treats and milk shakes while standing on the wet floor covered with hoses that were continually clearing away the milk from the dairy. Mount Bernard's Dairy was another great place at Hamilton Rd. and Adelaide. I guess you could say that I liked ice cream.

Most of the children attended either St. Mary's Catholic School on Lyle St. or Lorne Avenue Public at Lorne and English. You could hear the occasional chants of Cat-licker or Pot-licker depending which school you attended. During the summer months, we could hardly wait for the ice truck to come on deliveries. When the driver would chip away a 25 cent block for the ice-box, we would hop on the back of the truck to get the slivers of ice for a treat. I remember being so afraid of the feared Ragman. He would come along with his horse and wagon calling out Junk-Ho Junk-Ho. He was big and had a bushy black beard and long hair. The people would gather up their rags and junk and place it at the curb for recycling. Much like today.

Unfortunately, my childhood was interrupted by a horrific burn accident and I would miss three years of my life on Ontario St. as they were being spent in St. Joseph's hospital. They saved my life and only charged my father \$1.00 a day for the bed. He had to pay for everything else, the doctors, bandages, operations, medications. There were times that he would come home from work and rush to the hospital where they would place him on one table and me on the other and pump his blood into my veins. It was a hard and expensive time for my family but thankfully I lived and it wasn't too long after my recovery that I was able to once more explore my beloved London.

The year was 1944 and in the space of one city block, my four siblings worked downtown. My brother was manager of Dan McGee shoe stores on Richmond, one sister clerked at Wallace's, another at the United Cigar Store and the other was a floating cashier for all the movie theatres. I remember telling me that when Mrs. Miniver was playing at a midnight show, the lineup was down Dundas and all up

Clarence St. There used to be a small built man who had a popcorn machine and a monkey with a cup on the opposite corner. You could smell the popcorn cooking and it was only 5 cents a bag. Sometimes the Salvation Army would play on Saturday nights on the south-east corner near their Citadel. Their members would sing and then they would pass a collection bag around.

Then there were the times my parents would take me to the old city market. Before that, however, we would all gather at the London Cafe where you went downstairs off Dundas St. next to Lowe's theatre. There we would have the \$1.00 blue plate special. Then according to the season, we would go the market. In the spring, it would be for plants in wooden flats, in the fall, crisp red apples and vegetables and in the winter we would go into Anderson's Meats to buy our Christmas turkey. They would be displayed hanging upside down by their claws, plucked with little brown bags over their eyes and beaks. The floor was covered with sawdust and there was barrel of dill pickles in brine for five cents. It seems a lot of good things only cost a nickel in those days. Other times we would go to Nelson's market on the corner of Dundas and English where the fruits and vegetables would literally spill out onto the street in their abundance. Mr. Nelson, in his white apron, would be putting red plump cherries, plums, peaches or whatever else was in season into brown paper bags for his satisfied customers.

In my teen years, I attended Sacred Heart High School on Queen's Ave., where Catholic Central is situated now. It was a small building disconnected from the convent where the nuns lived. Across the corner where the Four Seasons apartments stand now, there was St. Angelus College. We were a secretarial school and they were more geared to University or nursing. The boys attended Del La Salle High School on Richmond St. near St. Peter's. On Saturdays we would all gather there for socializing and dancing. The girls would all attend the Catholic Culture Centre where Fred Kennedy would teach us phys-ed and referee our games. We would go off to compete in basketball games with Beal Tech, Medway High school and Alma College in St. Thomas. We had to wear school uniforms in those days. Ours consisted of a maroon blazer trimmed in white braid, a white blouse, grey skirt and a maroon beanie. How we envied the St. Angelus girls with their navy melton cloth blazers and white and blue plaid kilts. They also had the greatest, light blue gym suits with gathered elastic legs. Our maroon ones had a collat skirt, which on one occasion some of us tried in vain to gather with elastic only to end getting the strap for unladylike behaviour.

There were some great school trips that I remember. Going down to Springbank on the buses to spend a day of races, games and hot-dogs and mallow roll ice-cream. Other times we took the L&PS down to Port Stanley where we would go to the boardwalk for the rides and end up at Mackie for fries and orangeade. On some Sunday evenings we would go to Victoria for band night where you could sit on the park benches while the music filled the flower filled park.

These are just some of my favourite memories. Others would include the wonderful Christmas windows at Simpson's Dept. store, lovely ladies dress shops such as the Artistic, Richmond Shop and Evangeline. Shoe stores like Rowland Hill's, Cooks and Arliss's. There was a wonderful cafe called Boomer's that served sandwiches and tea. Ligget's Drug Store on the side of Simpson's where you could purchase a Tin Lizzie or David Harum sundae. The old Metropolitan, Kresge's and Woolworth all near each other and doing a great business. It was a busy and vibrant downtown London in those days. People would drive their cars up and down the main street and sometimes stop and people watch. The shows were lined up and if you weren't early it would be SRO.

These are not great historical memories of a wonderful city but just a wholesome everyday remembrance. When I got married, we would take our children down to look in Simpson's windows, shop at the new market and buy their clothes at Young Canada just like my parents did. It was a different time but I just wanted to give you an idea of what a wonderful impression it all left on me and I hope that down the road there will be a resurrection of our downtown to evoke other childhood memories to equal mine.

A Message To The Citizens of 'The Forest City'

Bill & Norma Clare

We enjoy living in London, Ontario -The Forest City. You will find us, an illustrious group, standing tall and proud - on streets, in parks, everywhere! Our history takes us back to a major tree-planting campaign in 1870 when fifteen thousand tiny trees from Dorchester were planted along our streets. Thereafter, tree planting became a tradition; in 1922, London was given the title of "The Forest City".

We stand in a variety of assorted kinds, shapes and sizes: maples, beeches, oaks, Chinese elms and willows. Sparkles of brightness dash through our green canopy in the white ash and birch, the silver poplar and maple. Many friends live among us: the cottonwood, gingko, hemlock, aspen, honey locust, Nanny berry and the pawpaw. And interspersed among our deciduous trees are the cedar, blue and Norway spruce, Scotch and Austrian pine, Douglas and balsam fir.

We are part of what makes London so picturesque, so unique! Consider the magnificent irreplaceable trees of Springbank, Victoria, Harris and other parks. And as we tower from the lofty heights of Reservoir Hill, we have a marvelous view of London. Yet at the same time, it almost seems we have a glimpse of heaven!

Through each season we share our own special beauty with you. In spring, our multi-hued depths spread across parklands in a perfect green cathedral, our boughs filled with promise. We provide homes and nutrients for birds, insects and animals, and offer shade for carpets of flowers and mosses among our roots. We help prevent the erosion of surface soil. But you are rapidly cutting down our woodlots. When our roots no longer help the ground soak up rainwater, flooding occurs. We serve you, the little creatures and insects in so many ways; still you continue to contribute to our demise. Why, oh why do you want to destroy us?

In summer, we cradle the mourning dove gently cooing for her mate, and the owl softly hooting at night. We enjoy the laughter of children echoing from our tree houses. We spread our welcoming shade to offer you peaceful oases and relief from the scorching sun and humidity. Are you aware trees can actually reduce air temperatures by two or three degrees, thus saving energy and money? We act as natural purifiers; we help produce oxygen and utilize dangerous carbon dioxide in the air. Desperately we try to assist in preventing the greenhouse effect. Please stop choking us! We implore you, "Please give us back the clean air!"

Through autumn's long, lazy days, our rustling leaves burst forth in a glorious array before they gradually sink into the ground to re-nourish the soil. In our gnarled roots, small creatures find safety from their predators. Our branches whisper of the approaching cold weather. But you help create the destructive acid rain which deposits layers of pollutants on our leaves. And you are ruthless in your rampant destruction of wood lots! Why are you so careless? Stop! Please! Now! Before it's too late!

In winter, our outstretched arms embrace drifting snowflakes; and the sheer beauty of hoar frost clings to us. Cardinals and blue jays chant from our branches. When winds shriek through the frigid air, we provide windbreaks for you, thus reducing the cost of heating your homes. Also, depending on our size, we can add great value to your property. But each year, London's majestic woodlands grow smaller, sicker and weaker. And so, holding out our tired arms, we silently whisper, "Why? Why do you torture us?"

As you can see, trees are an integral part of London's past and present - and hopefully, its future. But how long will this last? For soon we'll no longer be able to provide habitat for birds and other creatures. Very soon we'll no longer be here to help protect you! Why aren't you concerned about your actions, your thoughtlessness? We are your trees - yours! We too live and breathe! Please hear our poignant plea that you will try to save us, just as we in turn will help you if you'll allow us. Come! Walk with us; share our beauty. Above all, please protect us; our future is in your hands!

Research Studies And Concepts Of My Practice

Charles T. Peterson, D.D.S.

1. Dating from my studies with Dr. H.K. Box, my army experience and subsequent clinical practice, I have concerned myself with oral health measures directed towards the conservation of oral tissues and the prevention of periodontal diseases. I have carried out extensions of Dr. Box's findings and have found them based on sound biological concepts. It is my firm belief that oral diseases are caused by specific infective agents. It is my observation that the etiological infective agents are not bacterial but are viral fungal in nature.

2. In office laboratory studies, smears and cultures of material taken from the gingival crevice were studied under dark field microscopy which showed microorganisms of mycotic nature associated with the infected oral tissues.

3. Continuing Dr. Box's work and others who were identifying microorganisms in the oral tissues, some therapeutic products and medications have been developed to treat infections in the mouth and their clinical use has been reported.

4. Through the Western Dental Foundation, studies were made of residual areas in the jawbone, identifying many of the microorganisms and their relationship as a serious foci of infection in the body.

5. With these background studies the ultimate goal is to pinpoint the infective agents. I have found specific medications and fungicidal compounds to be effective in treating oral infections. The goal is to develop a preventive program of oral hygiene care.

6. Clinical studies in my practice have indicated that periodontal disease starts in the very young child and early preventive periodontal treatment in children avoids serious periodontal disease later in life.

7. Periodontal studies indicate that healthy oral tissues produce a healthy tooth and that oral infection should be controlled or corrected before extracting or mechanical work is done on the teeth.

8. I believe that if child's jaw is developed by functional biting that later serious orthodontic problems can be avoided in many cases.

9. I believe that the tooth and oral tissues are living tissues and should be treated and healed as professional service and the whole mouth must be treated - not just the tooth - for successful oral health care.

10. As are most dentists, I am concerned with nutrition and the effect that our highly refined, soft diets, etc. have on jaw structures, occlusion and general health of the oral tissues.

11. I believe that most of the present recommended methods of oral hygiene do more to increase oral disease than eradicate them. "Brushing teeth" only pushes the cleaning agents (toothpastes) and debris between the teeth, blocking the interproximal paths creating virulent incubation zones and interfering with the natural self-cleansing action of the mouth. If professional prophylaxis included the cleaning out of the natural pathways between the teeth and patients were encouraged to keep this clean, many problems of oral sepsis would be solved. New devices and studies have produced new concept of Comprehensive Oral Prophylaxis. It is means by which the triangular depressions on the approximal sides of the teeth can be properly cleaned and polished and then the interproximal area and gingival crevice can be kept clean by the use of the interproximal brush, such as Tooth Flox. It is my firm contention that if the natural pathways are kept clean, then many problems of stasis and oral sepsis can be solved. A means for doing this and to correct oral uncleanness is now possible.

"DON'T BRUSH YOUR TEETH" - "CLEANSE YOUR MOUTH"

"Brushing your teeth" will not bring you good oral health. The expression is obsolete. The act, in fact, may cause damage to your mouth. To me, this phrase symbolizes concept of oral health care that is

completely inadequate.

"BRUSHING YOUR TEETH"

Specifically:

1. Pushes deposits between the teeth where most decay starts.
2. Leaves debris at the necks of the teeth to cause chalkiness.
3. Does not clean the periodontal tissues or tongue.
4. Leaves waste particles and microorganisms around the gum margin to irritate the gum tissues to cause puffy tissue or recession.
5. Permits microorganisms to break down the attachment processes of the teeth causing periodontal disease, the chief reason for loss of teeth today.

Generally:

1. Helps to promote cosmetic toothpastes which irritate the soft tissues and damage the supporting tissues of the mouth.
2. Has increased rather than decreased the dental problems.
3. Has tended to make dentistry a cosmetic aid, rather than health service.
4. The attitude that the condition of the teeth is the only concern conceals the true nature of oral sepsis in the mouth. This hastens the loss of oral structures.
5. The phrase "Brushing your teeth" has given the public false impression of what oral health care really is; as result many people end up losing all their teeth at an early age.

WHY BRUSHING YOUR TEETH IS WRONG

Oral debris and microorganisms are released by the breaking up of food which collects on the tongue and oral tissues. These contagiums are forced by the tongue against the teeth and become the source of infection around the teeth. When the oral tissues are tight and firm against the teeth and the fissures on the teeth self-cleansing, there is little place for substances to incubate. If the teeth are loose and the attachment around the teeth is flabby, the areas become irritated and eventually the crevices become the favourite zone for oral infection to start. When these "between the teeth crevices" are thoroughly cleaned out and the whole mouth cleansed, this insidious process of oral cleanliness is controlled.

GOOD ORAL HYGIENE PROGRAM

1. An oral hygiene program should help children develop their jaw structures and keep their mouths healthy throughout life. Children's teeth must function in all positions. The lower jaw should work against the upper jaw in all positions without jarring. Mothers should be encouraged to nurse their children. Young child should be encouraged to bite and work for food. This strengthens his jaw bone and makes room for the first and second teeth. Good jaw structure means better speech, finer facial contours and makes mouth more self-cleansing.

2. An oral hygiene program depends on good nutrition. Unrefined, nutritious food can change the colour of the gum tissues to healthy pink stippled appearance. Cultured milk products such as buttermilk remove desire for refined sugars and sweets. Most children should enjoy chewing spareribs, chicken or meat bones.

3. A child must be encouraged to chew hard abrasive food which makes his mouth self-cleansing and will firm the tissues around the teeth. Practicing good oral health habits in childhood provides stimulation and satisfaction. The child will associate pleasure with his mouth. Thumb sucking with its damaging side effects is often avoided.

4. To combat the insidious process of tooth decay and oral tissue destruction, all parts of the mouth must be cleansed.

DON'T "BRUSH YOUR TEETH"- CLEANSE YOUR MOUTH

General Principles

In cleansing your mouth, clean all the tissues, not just the teeth. To clean all your mouth includes "in-between-areas-of-the-teeth" , the surfaces of the teeth, the periodontal tissues, tongue, palate and inside of the cheeks. Cleansers used should prevent infection and clean the oral tissues as well as the teeth. Cleansers should be chiefly liquid in form, permitting "washing out" of debris between the teeth where tooth brush cannot reach. They should not consist of any ingredient that would irritate, scald or burn delicate oral tissues.

The main object in cleansing the teeth is to cleanse the "in-between-the-teeth" surfaces. These are curved triangular areas facing each other and united by gingival bands of equal proneness to bacterial adhesions. These triangles and connecting neck bands constitute only 10% of the crown surface of the tooth, but they are the most important 10%.

CLEANSING BETWEEN THE TEETH

Products such as dental floss or "simulators" have been devised to clean between the teeth. Dental floss, unless used with extreme care will tear the gum tissue in between the teeth. Simulators in most cases merely plunge the material further between the teeth. The most effective "between-the-teeth-cleanser" I have found is Tooth Flox.

Tooth Flox is a wet strength cellulose paper with miniature brush edges to be inserted between the teeth to cleanse and polish under the contact points. It is able to remove the food fragments from between the teeth and the microbial masses from the gingival crevices.

Tooth Flox is half the thickness of dental floss and makes it possible (for the first time) to cleanse thoroughly the interdental spaces where most tooth decay starts. Tooth Flox cleans out the gingival crevice and firms the gum tissues without injury.

Tooth Flox has the added benefit of being available in convenient packages, for purse or pocket, and provides a means to remove food fragments discreetly at any time. Tooth Flox should be grasped firmly in one hand curved close to point of insertion, and drawn around each tooth. Difficult areas may be reached by using the "probing" end of the Tooth Flox and inserting directly between the teeth. It cleans out the triangular areas and the gingival crevice where the tooth brush cannot reach.

Single or double thickness of Tooth Flox may be used since its thickness and pliability will permit it to pass between the contact points. Tooth Flox will conform to the contour of the tooth, clean out the gingival crevice and firm the attachment of the gum tissue to the tooth. Tooth Flox can be renewed by tearing it apart, creating a new soft edge. Tooth Flox provides a means of immediate removal of food fragments and irritations after a meal. Rinsing with a little clear water after using Tooth Flox removes the loosened debris from the mouth. Tooth Flox is now available in Drug Stores.

CLEANSING THE MOUTH

Fungicide solutions, such as Oralave, are designed to cleanse the oral tissues and aid in the debridement of the fungus filaments and debris from the tongue, consolidate between the teeth and penetrate deep onto the tissues of the mouth. Fungicide solutions are in liquid form to be used as a rinse or on the brush.. Liquid cleansers wash debris from between the teeth in areas where the tooth brush cannot reach.

The French say: "Lavez la bouche." I say: "Cleanse the mouth - don't just brush your teeth.

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